



# Olympia Report

**Jim Honeyford** Republican Caucus Chair

STATE SENATOR • 15TH DISTRICT

SERVING ALL OF CLICKITAT AND SKAMANIA COUNTIES, SOUTH YAKIMA COUNTY AND SOUTHEAST CLARK COUNTY.

MARCH 7, 2005

Dear friends,

The Legislature has just passed a crucial point in the 2005 session. Committees in the House of Representatives and the Senate last week had until 5 p.m. on Wednesday, March 2, to approve bills in their committee or they were considered dead for the session.

A review of the bills passed by this “cut-off” reveal the true priorities of the leaders of the legislative majority this year. Despite their public promises to work to improve Washington’s economy and create jobs, majority legislative leaders are moving some bad bills that will only hurt job creation in our state.

These leaders also failed to pass important bills to protect our children in school and to ensure the integrity of degrees earned by our teachers.

One of the few bright spots remaining after this cut-off was passage of my bill to increase the penalties on drivers who recklessly and purposefully fail to yield to emergency vehicles. Drivers who fail to slow down when an emergency vehicle is on the roadway or those who try to beat the vehicle through an intersection are putting many lives in danger.

Even when I’m disappointed in the legislative process, I hope you know it’s always an honor to serve you and I’m working hard to protect your interests.

Please keep in touch throughout the session.

Sincerely,

Senator Jim Honeyford

## Retro-bution—Putting workplace safety behind political payback

After the 2004 election, Sen. Karen Keiser, in her role as communications director of the Washington State Labor Council, told a Seattle newspaper that “our plan is to cut the funding out from under (the Building Industry Association of Washington).”

In their efforts to nail the builders, Democratic leaders have introduced measures to severely restrict private worker safety programs called “retrospective rating” — or “retro”— programs that help businesses recoup some of their workers compensation premiums if they operate safer than average workplaces. Individual businesses choose to belong to industry “retro” plans and agree to the fees the retro organizations charge to belong. These retro programs take their fees out of the refunds awarded to participating businesses and the businesses get the rest. Some retro organizations spend their part of the refund on political activity— just like unions spend their dues.

SB 5842 and HB 1875 limit these programs in two ways:

- 1) They severely restrict the types of activities the retro organization may spend its fees on.
- 2) They limit who may belong to a retro organization. This impacts groups like the Farm Bureau that allow wineries and other farm-related groups to participate in their retro program.

(continued next page)

### Committee assignments:

- Water, Energy & Environment
- Labor, Commerce, Research & Development
- Rules
- Facilities & Operations

### Contacting me in Olympia:

Office address:

316 Legislative Building

PO Box 40415

Olympia, WA 98504-0415

Phone: (360) 786-7684

FAX: (360) 786-1266

E-mail: [honeyfor\\_ji@leg.wa.gov](mailto:honeyfor_ji@leg.wa.gov)

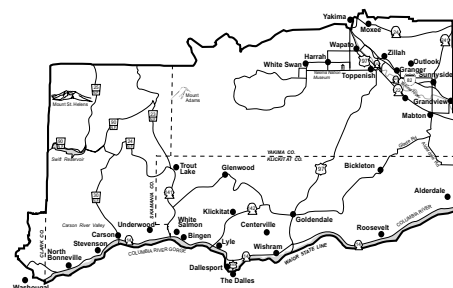
### Toll-free Legislative Hotline:

1-800-562-6000

### Legislative information on the Internet:

[www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov)

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15th District

(Retro-bution—continued from previous page)

**GRADE:** These bills receive an “F” because they hurt working families by reducing incentives for safe workplaces and because they infringe upon businesses’ rights to free speech and free association. The only purpose for these bills is “retro-bution.” They don’t improve the program in anyway, no businesses are complaining about the program, and all programs are voluntary.

**STATUS:** SB 5842 passed the policy committee cut-off and is in the Senate Ways & Means Committee. If the Ways & Means Committee approves it by March 7, it will become eligible for a vote of the entire Senate. HB 1875 is in the House Rules Committee and already eligible to be moved to the House floor.

“Diploma mills” remain alive and well

Under Washington law, teachers can move up the pay scale by earning additional college credits and advanced degrees to increase their knowledge and skills. News stories that teachers have earned credits from online universities that are not even accredited or legitimate prompted the filing of **Senate Bill 5634**, a measure that requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to verify credits to be used for pay increases.

Credits must be earned from an institution accredited by an association recognized by the state’s Higher Education Coordinating Board. Once the credits are verified, salary increases can be approved. It’s not fair to good teachers who work hard to earn additional degrees to know a few bad acting colleagues are moving up the pay scale using phony degrees—and it’s certainly not fair to our students. This bill was given a public hearing in the Senate education committee on March 2, but was not even brought up for a vote by the chair.

Bill prohibiting pornography at school dies in committee

The Senate education committee also failed to pass Senate Bill 5677, which would revoke certificates or permits of teachers and other educational employees who possess pornographic material on school grounds. This bill sprang from a news story where a teacher who had previously been suspended at one school for viewing pornography at school was charged with the statutory rape of a student at a new school. Again, as a former teacher and coach, I think it hurts the entire profession when bad teachers such as this are allowed to remain in the classroom. I’m disappointed our committee chair didn’t agree.

